

Preparing for the Nativity of Christ

Dear Parents:

As we move through the Nativity Fast, the Church celebrates the Repose of Saint Herman of Alaska, on December 13. The life of St. Herman -- his kindness, humility, and love for all of creation -- gives our young persons guidance in their own preparation for the Feast of the Nativity.

This lesson, which will cover two weeks, includes:

An icon of Saint Herman, with the Troparion to him,
A copy of the story of Saint Herman's life (from the OCA's lessons on the "Saints of North America.")
Read the life of Saint Herman together with your child.
Sing or say the troparion for Saint Herman together.

A puzzle activity. When the children finish the puzzle, they will have the words: "as, neighbor, your, love and yourself" remaining. When put in order, the sentence will read: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12: 31). These words help the children remember how to treat other people -- with kindness, unselfishness, and helpfulness. They should understand that the word "neighbor" includes all the people in their lives -- family, friends, members of the Church, schoolmates, teachers, etc.)

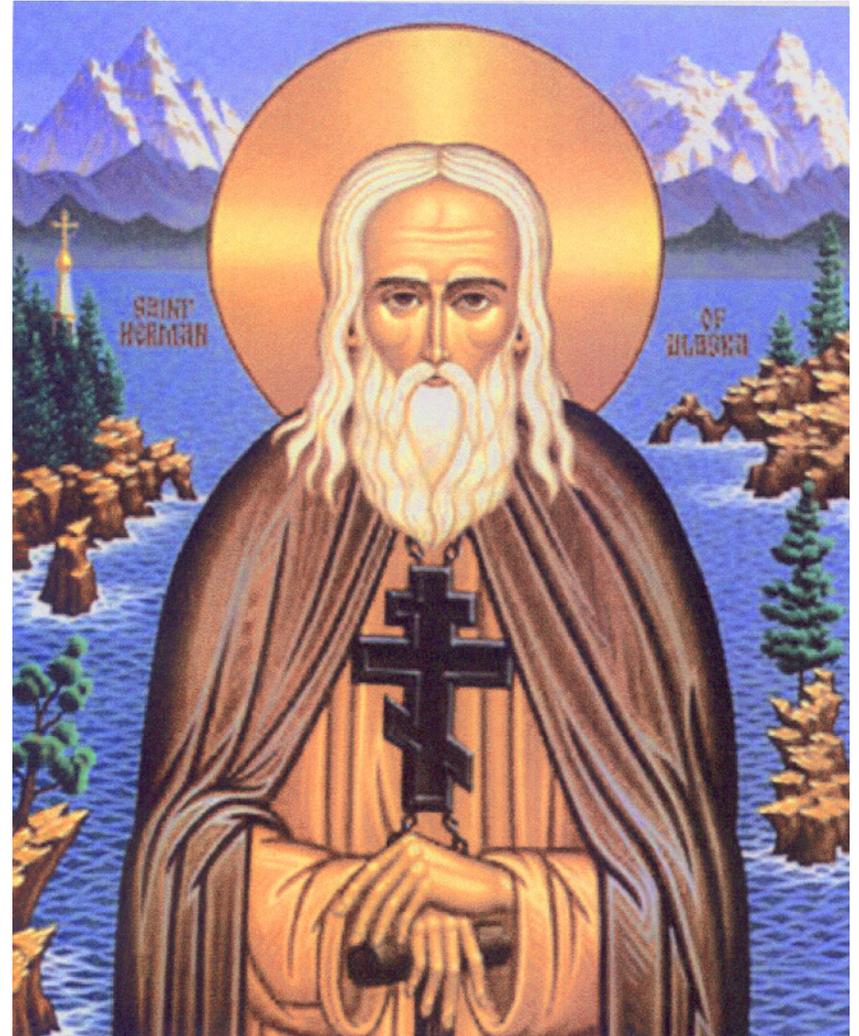
NOTE: The craft portion of the activity will consist of making a Christmas ornament (an icon of the Theotokos with the Christ Child). The craft will take 2 weeks to complete: (1 week to make the ornament, and 1 week for the glitter-glue to dry), so let your children know that they should not expect to take it home until next week. Thanks.

Troparion to Saint Herman of Alaska

(Tone 4)

O blessed Father Herman of Alaska,
North star of Christ's holy Church,
The light of your holy life and great deeds
Guides those who follow the Orthodox way.
Together we lift high the Holy Cross
You planted firmly in America.
Let all behold and glorify Jesus Christ,
Singing his holy Resurrection.

Saint Herman of Alaska **“Wonderworker of All America”**



**Blessed Father Herman,
pray unto God for us!**

SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA

Saint Herman was born in 1756 to a middle-class family in Serpukhov, Russia, which is part of the Moscow Diocese.

As a young boy, he led a very prayerful life.

At the age of sixteen, he decided to go to Holy Trinity Sergius Hermitage about twelve miles from St. Petersburg, Russia, to study about the Orthodox faith. A hermitage is a monastery where monks (or nuns) live a life of prayer and work.

He lived at the Hermitage for about five years and then decided to go to Valaam Monastery, which is near Finland.

While Monk Herman was at the Valaam Monastery, he was chosen, along with nine other men, to go to North America. They walked across Russia and Siberia and then went by boat to Kodiak Island in Alaska.

In 1794 St. Herman's life on Kodiak Island began as he ministered to the Russian fur traders who had settled there.

About a mile and a half by water from Kodiak Island is Spruce Island. Monk Herman loved Spruce Island. It reminded him of Valaam Monastery.

Spruce Island was covered with trees, and for the first summer on the island Monk Herman lived in a cave he had dug by himself. After that summer, the Russian American Company built him a cell, (which is a small hut that a monk lives in) and he lived in it for the next forty years.

He planted a garden with potatoes, cabbage, and many other vegetables and ate fish from the little river that ran through the middle of the island.

Whether it was summer or winter, Father Herman wore the same clothes. This included a deerskin shirt without sleeves, shoes, a klobuk (a special kind of hat that monks wear), and a cassock. He slept on a wooden bench and used a block of wood for a pillow.

While he was on the island, he loved to feed the animals by hand, especially the bears.

Saint Herman enjoyed helping people whose lives were difficult, and he especially cared about children.

One day there was a flood on the island and everyone was frightened. The people asked Father Herman for help. He took the icon of the Theotokos, placed it on the ground and asked the people to pray. The water never went past the icon.

Another time, there was a forest fire on the island where Father Herman lived. He and his friend Ignatius dug a ditch and covered it with moss. The fire roared up the hill and stopped as soon as it reached the moss.

These are just some of the miracles that happened during Father Herman's long life.

On December 13, 1837, at the age of 81, he died in his cell on Spruce Island.

On August 9, 1970, the Orthodox Church in America canonized Father Herman as the First American Saint.

Tell about some of the things that Saint Herman did that can serve as examples to us about living a Christian life:

Praying

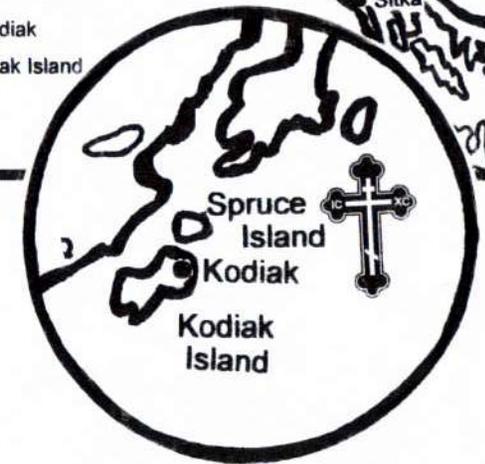
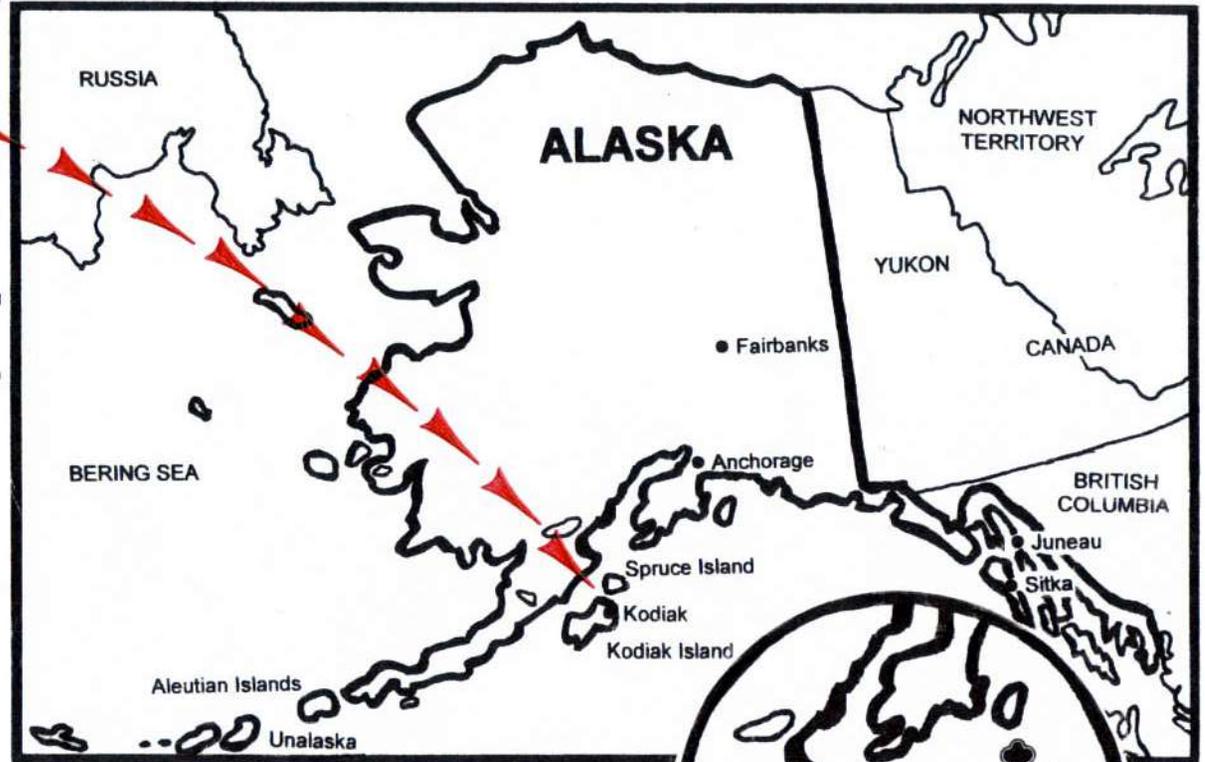
Taking care of the land (God's creation)

Not being too concerned about "things"

Helping other people

Did Saint Herman give his love only to people?

St. Herman's Travels



St. Herman of Alaska

Wonderworker of All America

Commemoration Date: August 9th

Monk Herman was born in 1756 to a merchant class family in Serpukhov, Russia, part of the Moscow Diocese. As a young boy, he had a very prayerful life. At the age of sixteen, he decided to go to Holy Trinity Sergius Hermitage about twelve miles from St. Petersburg, Russia to study about the church.

From the time he was a young monk at the Monastery, many miracles began to occur in his life. He found a large sore on his neck that grew larger and larger and made it very difficult for him to swallow. His face became disfigured. He decided to lock himself inside his cell, a small room, and pray before the icon of the Theotokos. During the night, he dreamt the Theotokos healed him. When he awoke the next morning, the sore had disappeared.

He lived at the Hermitage for about five years and then decided to go to the Valaam Monastery near Finland. While Monk Herman was at the Monastery, he was chosen, along with nine other men, to go to Kodiak Island in North America. They walked across Russia and Siberia and then went by boat to Alaska. In 1794 his life on Kodiak Island began as he ministered to the Russian fur traders who had settled there.

About a mile and a half by water from Kodiak Island is Spruce Island. Monk Herman loved Spruce Island. It reminded him of Valaam. Spruce Island was covered with trees and for the first summer on the island Monk Herman lived in a cave he had dug by himself. After that summer, the Russian American Company built him a cell in which he lived for the next forty years.

He planted potatoes, cabbage, and many other vegetables and ate fish from the little river that ran through the middle of the island. Whether it was summer or winter, Father Herman wore the same clothes. This included a deerskin shirt without sleeves, shoes, klobuk, and a cassock. He slept on a wooden bench and his blanket was a wooden board.

While he was on the island, he loved to feed the animals by hand, especially the bears. He enjoyed giving advice to people that were having a hard life, and was especially concerned about the children. One day there was a flood on the island and everyone was frightened. The people asked Father Herman for help. He took the icon of the Theotokos, placed it on the ground and asked the people to pray. The water never went past the icon.

Another time, there was a forest fire on the island where Father Herman lived. He and his friend Ignatius dug a ditch and covered it with moss. The fire roared up the hill and stopped as soon as it reached the moss.

These are just some of the miracles that happened during Father Herman's long life. On December 13, 1837, at the age of 81, he died in his cell on Spruce Island. On August 9, 1970, the Orthodox Church in America canonized Father Herman as the First American Saint.

Holy Father Herman Folk Hymn

St. Herman of Alaska

This folk hymn in honor of St. Herman, whose feast is celebrated on December 13 and August 9, was written by the sisters of the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, Ellwood City, PA. It is sung to the same melody as the familiar folk hymn to St. Nicholas. Permission is granted to copy and distribute.

As we sail by canoe or boat
To the isle where you once abode
Spruces tall and evergreen
Remember you for they have seen
Holy Father Herman!

You who are a Holy Fisherman
Caught us in your net of wisdom
Feed us with God's Holy Word
Guide us safely heaven-ward
Holy Father Herman!

You who came to us from afar
As a guide and a bright North Star
Giving Aleuts and us
Orthodoxy's sacred trust
Holy Father Herman!

Lead us like a shepherd leads his sheep
Show the light that we should keep
Lead us through our sins and wrongs
Help us sing a heavenly song
Holy Father Herman!

Simple monk living on Spruce Island
Loving all with God thus united
"Let us love God above all."
May we heed your holy call
Holy Father Herman!

You who love Herman the lowly
Give your life to our God wholly
For you Herman intercedes
Helping you in word and deeds
Holy Father Herman!

Your pure prayer calmed the stormy seas
Intercede for us in our needs.
With our hearts we praise you here
With you close we need not fear
Holy Father Herman!

You who lived in a hermit's cell
Came with you Hosts and Saints to dwell
"Christ is Risen", Herman sang
Joined by angels, heaven rang!
Holy Father Herman!

You who love children as your own
Pray for us now before God's throne
Shield us from all evil darts
Help us love God with our hearts
Holy Father Herman!